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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a rural school program that assists high school special education students in achieving a successful transition from the school to the community. Plans for transition are first introduced at the special education staffing in 10th grade and are viewed as an integral part of the individual education plan. The transition coordinator keeps track of student referrals to community agencies and the services received through a one-page form that also provides space to include transition goals. A copy of the transition plan is given to the parents and school. Transition goals are also documented on the individual education plan. A list of the eight general goals are included and emphasize vocational planning and determination of appropriate services. At the time of the initial staffing, a transition questionnaire is given to the student, parents, and teachers to complete. The questionnaire helps to identify specific strengths and weaknesses of the student. A monitoring system that uses a computer program helps the transition coordinator track the progress of each student in reaching the transition plan goals. An individual exit interview is completed with each student the last month of his or her senior year to reassure the student of continued support and to resolve any problems while the student is still in school. The program continues to serve students for a minimum of 3 years after their graduation. The forms used to implement the transition program are included. (LP)

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Ease of Transition Through Direct Service

RC019530

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EASE OF TRANSITION THROUGH DIRECT SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

High school students, their parents, and the special education staff within the Green Valley AEA 14 catchment area have been involved in the Transition Program since the spring of 1989. Since that time, 230 transition plans have been written and are being monitored. At the present time, the Transition Program is serving students in 20 school districts, beginning at the tenth grade and continuing on for a minimum of three years after they have exited the school program.

DEVELOPMENT

There were three important factors of consideration when developing the Transition Program in Southwest Central Iowa:
1) geography, 2) Work Experience Program, and 3) simplicity.

The area Green Valley AEA 14 serves covers 3,800 square miles and has a population of 72,000, or a population density of 18.9 persons per acre. Twenty to twenty-five percent of Green Valley is at or below poverty level, with two of the counties being at the bottom of the economic ladder in the state. Except for Amtrak, which transverses the southern part of the state, there is no easily accessible public transportation available, beyond that of a few established week-day routes through a system called The Public Trolley.

A second important consideration in developing the Transition Program was the philosophy of the Work Experience Program; the foundation of the Transition Program itself. From the inception of the Work Experience Program, our instructors have worked directly with the students. The instructors not only place students on various job sites but work directly with students in the classroom. This means individualized programs, tailoring each program to fit the needs of the student, i.e. assessing the student's skills, abilities, and interests both in the classroom and at the work place. By closure, the instructor is knowledgeable of the student's capabilities and thereby can serve as an important resource when it comes to vocational and community placement for the student.

In the early development of the Transition Program, we realized in order to effectively serve this sparse population, which is spread over a wide area, we would need to develop a program that would allow flexibility as well as continuity amongst the twenty school districts, yet still be able to effectively serve both students and parents alike. Our main objectives then were to simplify the process of transition, give responsibility back to the students and parents, and provide personal service.

TRANSITION PLAN

Transition is introduced at the time of the special education staffing in tenth grade with the Transition Coordinator in attendance. As long as the student receives some type of services through special education, and those services continue while the student is in high school, the Transition Coordinator continues to be a member of the student's staffing team.

EC 018530

From the day transition was implemented in the school districts, the program was not considered as being separate, either in the ensuing discussion during the development of the Individual Education Plan or in the implementation of the plan itself. Transition is viewed as a normal process and is accepted as such by most of the school districts. Agencies in this area view the Transition Program as the appropriate linkage between the school system and the community at large.

The transition plan itself consists only of one page and lists services and agencies that are available (Form A). Beside each agency and services listed are open spaces to fill in the dates when the service/agency is discussed, when contact was made, and when the agency accepted the student as a client. The plan also provides space to write out the transition goals (Form B) which would be appropriate for that student. Because the transition plan is on NCR paper, a copy is immediately given to the parent, one to the school, and the third retained by the Coordinator.

While the staffing is still in session, the appropriate transition goals are transferred on to the IEP by numbers (i.e. "The Transition Program is implemented by the use of Goals 1, 2, and 3."). The objectives to carry out those transition goals are written by the special education teacher according to the plan set forth during the staffing. By the close of the staffing, no additional forms need to be written. In summary, the transition plan becomes an integral part of the educational plan.

TRANSITION GOALS

One other aspect of the transition plan needs to be mentioned: transition goals. We have developed a list of eight transition goals (Form B) which can be drawn from when the team discusses the needs of the student. While there may be other goals that could be included, we feel the eight listed cover the essentials. At no time are more than four of the goals listed on the Transition Plan.

TRANSITION QUESTIONNAIRE

Depending upon the student's level of functioning within the community, as well as within the school setting, a survival questionnaire (Form C, available upon request) at the time of the staffing is given by the Transition Coordinator to the student to take home and fill out (Refer to Goal 3, Form B). This questionnaire covers the following areas: social skills; domestic; vocational; transportation; leisure; education and training; financial need; post-high school planning, and other. Because the questionnaire is designed with the understanding that individuals have differing views when perceiving the skills and abilities of others, an identical transition questionnaire is given to the student's parents and special education teacher to fill out. Parents, students, and teachers fill out the questionnaire according to their individual perceptions as to the student's capabilities, having the necessary skills to survive independently within the community, as well as to the degree of independence the student may have. A "Yes" answer indicates a greater degree of independence. A "No" answer on the other hand indicates a greater need for support and/or additional training time. A quick rundown of "yes" and "no" circled answers in each of the main areas provide strong indicators in the areas that will need to be strengthened before transition can realistically be completed.

The Transition Coordinator does the summary of comparisons (Form D available upon request) noting the conflicts or lack of conflicts with each individual's perception of the student's survival skills. The team uses these conflicts as one additional source of information to draw from when writing specific objectives. The decision to address these misconceptions will depend upon the urgency to resolve these conflicts, the element of time as to when these conflicts need to be resolved, and whether or not the conflict or perceived need will create a barrier to successful job and/or community

placement. We have found that this questionnaire has opened lines of communication, and has helped the parent become more aware of decisions they need to make, and what area of survival skills need to be strengthened. The result has been a student who is more capable of functioning within a community setting.

MONITORING

The main thrust of the Transition Program is to give the responsibility of transition back to the student and parent. Our goal is to simplify, not confuse, the process by which responsibility can be successfully returned to the student and parent. The job of the Transition Coordinator is then to monitor that process, and to make sure the process is begun for the student at the earliest possible time and still be valid at the time of graduation or exiting the school program.

The monitoring system was developed and then modified to provide essential information necessary to assist in developing an appropriate transition plan for each student, as well as to monitor the progress towards reaching the goals set at the time of the staffing. The essential information for monitoring includes: what has happened, what is to occur, when it will occur, has it occurred, what services are to be offered, and essential biographical information relating to the student's abilities and placement in the educational program.

This information is easily included on a half page (Form E) through a computer program known as Desktop© and with the use of a Macintosh SE® computer. The program allows multiple files to be brought up at one time. Within minutes, the data that has been accumulated on each individual student can be collected, distributed, modified, and compared, depending upon the need for such information.

Information found on the screen includes the following headings:

1. Name	10. Graduation Date	19. Strong	28. DHS
2. Address	11. Phone	20. Weak	29. Post Sec. Refer.
3. Parents	12. Transition Accept.	21. Work Exp. Instr.	30. Post Sec. Cont.
4. Disability	13. Transition Date	22. Work Exp. Refer.	31. SSI/DDU
5. SS number	14. Transition a	23. Work Exp. Cont.	32. Support. Emp.
6. Date of Birth	15. Transition b	24. Voc Rehab. Refer.	33. Grp. Home Ref.
7. Grade	16. Read	25. Voc Rehab. Cont.	34. Grp. Home Cont.
8. School	17. Priority	26. JTPA Refer.	35. Rep. Number
9. Teacher	18. Information	27. JTPA Cont.	

Clarification of specific heading titles:

9 Assigned special education teacher
12 Transition may have been accepted at a later date, or the same date of the staffing
13 Date of the staffing does not automatically mean that transition services were offered or accepted
14 The date of the second year's staffing.
15 The date of the third staffing.
16 If some type of communication is needed, the date when contact is required is placed here for later flagging.
17 Any piece of information that requires immediate attention
18 Essential information to help clarify ease of transition; also intelligence test scores
19 Assets the student has, including strengths in education and/or vocational
20 Deficits, weaknesses, limitations
#26/27 Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)
28 Department of Human Services (DHS) includes mental health,welfare, social workers, food stamps, etc.

#29/30 Community colleges, vocational schools, trade schools, etc.
#31 SSI/DDU social security benefits both for income eligibility and disability eligibility
#32 Workshop evaluations, as well as employment
#35 Keeping track of number of students, and for identification purposes

Prior to the first staffing the Transition Coordinator attends, the above form is filled out with pertinent information obtained from the special education file located at the agency. Examination of the file by the Transition Coordinator, covering the special education history of the student, provides a longitudinal study of the progress or lack of progress being made. There have been times where specific discrepancies have been noted and subsequently brought to the attention of the team, i,e. psychological reports that appear to be in conflict when done by two or more different school psychologists. Questions relating to transition as well as to the academic progress of the student can then be more specific and vocational based. Bringing this information to the staffing allows the Coordinator to become an integral part of the staffing rather than an outsider viewing only one aspect of the student's life.

Because the Coordinator attends annual individual educational planning meetings, appropriate release of information forms can be filled out at the time and as needed. Integration of the Transition Program with the development of the IEP utilizes the most efficient time for all the members of the team.

Upon returning to the agency, the Transition Coordinator transfers the new and revised information back into the computer. Appropriate phone calls are made with various agencies and services to set up appointments with the student, and the special education teacher is contacted informing them of the appointment the student is to make. Letters are written to parents to explain once more the process that took place at the meeting, as well as to let them know that the contacts were made. Because the information has been integrated within the computer, the Transition Coordinator is capable of doing a variety of tasks as well as to coordinate the various steps taking place as the student progresses through the school system.

EXIT INTERVIEW

To further enhance the quality of the Transition Program, the Coordinator does individual contacts with all graduating seniors within the last month of their senior year. An individual exit interview is done with each student (Form F). This exit interview serves a two-fold purpose: 1) to allay any fears the student may still have regarding his/her future, i.e. the transition plan is still in effect, and 2) any problems that may have been encountered can still be effectively resolved while the student is still in school. On the flip side, if a student has refused services, though the recommendations were made at the time of the staffing, another opportunity is afforded him/her in an attempt to persuade the student to accept services. To some, the latter may appear to be taking the freedom away from the student; but in fact, a number of students upon graduating from high school, fiercely maintain their independence from any assistance either through agencies or through their own need to survive on their own. Last year, a number of students had verifiable summer employment in one of the mountain states, thus declining the services. As fall approached and these students were laid off, they looked again at the various services that had been offered while they were still in school. To their consternation, these students' names were now placed on the bottom of the waiting list, thus delaying services they wanted.

Although the exit interview does not always guarantee positive results in maintaining a continued vocational plan, the interview does allow the Coordinator to reassure the student that, should a change take place, the individual student still would have access to

services provided by the Coordinator, along with current information that is maintained in the computer file.

Again, the flexibility of the Transition Program to become directly involved, provides an effective, personally dynamic service to the schools, the communities, and, most importantly, to the students and parents we serve.

VOCATIONAL PLAN

One problem which has been encountered is preventing duplication of efforts between agencies and the work programs, both in terms of exploration and on-the-job type training. In order to prevent duplication, a form (Form G) was developed to better facilitate the flow of information between school and service deliverers. As was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the form allows the Work Experience Instructor's knowledge of the potential and abilities of his/her students to be tapped. This format has enhanced the process of communication, as well as broadening the spectrum of vocational choices open to the student.

CONCLUSION

The main points of our Transition Program are:

1. Shared responsibility between family and professionals in developing a vocational plan,
2. Making responsible decisions by informed parents/students,
3. Guidance through the transition process from school to the community,
4. A developed tracking process that is easy to utilize and access,
5. Professionals being creative in working with parents/students and other professionals,
6. Giving ownership of the transition planning to parents/students alike, and
7. With students now having a clearer picture as to who they are, students are better able to advocate for themselves when interviewing for jobs and when talking with instructors at the post-secondary level.

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TRANSITION PROGRAM DATA

NAME_____ SS#_____

PROGRAM_____ GRADE LEVEL_____

STAFFING DATE_____ TEACHER_____

	OFFERED			CONTACT	ACCEPTED
Transition Program.....	Yes	No	Date:_____	Date:_____	Date:_____
JTPA.....	Yes	No	Date:_____	Date:_____	Date:_____
Work Experience Program.....	Yes	No	Date:_____	Date:_____	Date:_____
Vocational Rehabilitation.....	Yes	No	Date:_____	Date:_____	Date:_____
Post -Secondary Living.....	Yes	No	Date:_____	Date:_____	Date:_____
Post-Secondary Education.....	Yes	No	Date:_____	Date:_____	Date:_____
Job Service.....	Yes	No	Date:_____	Date:_____	Date:_____
Social Services.....	Yes	No	Date:_____	Date:_____	Date:_____
Supervised Living.....	Yes	No	Date:_____	Date:_____	Date:_____
Supervised Work.....	Yes	No	Date:_____	Date:_____	Date:_____

GOAL_____

GOAL_____

GOAL_____

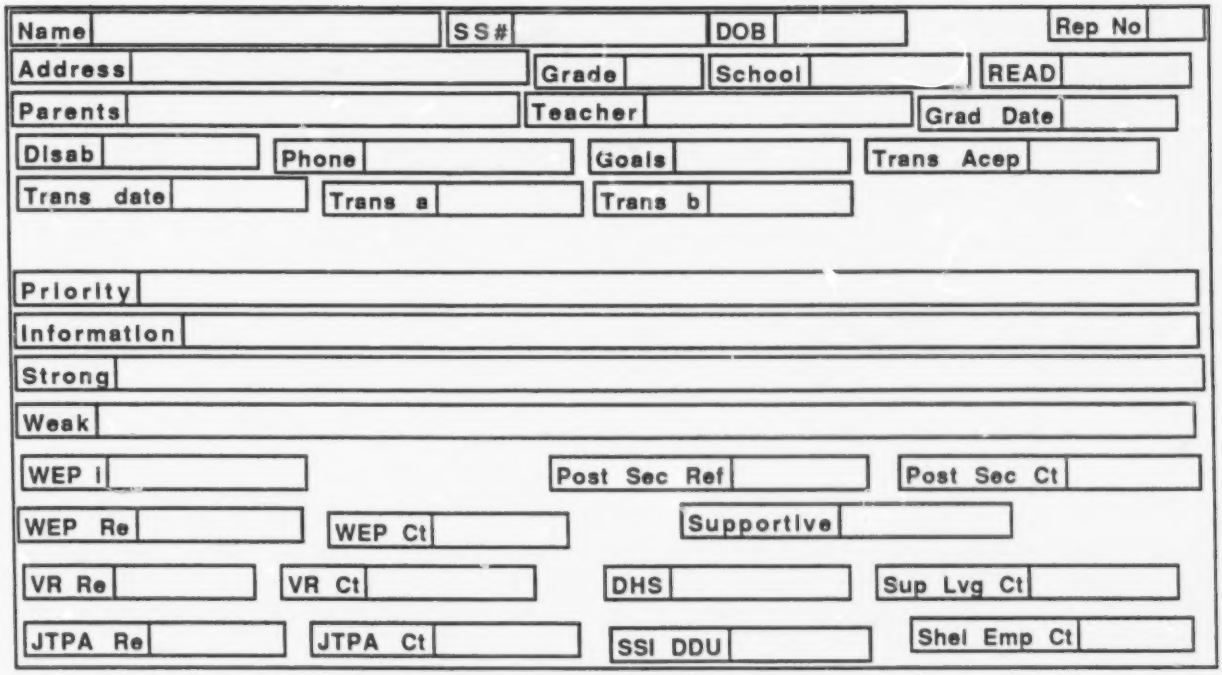
GOAL_____

GOAL_____

Transition Goals

GOAL 1	Vocational planning will be determined by student's interests, needs, and abilities.
GOAL 2	Linkage to appropriate service deliverers will be developed to help student in community planning.
GOAL 3	Adaptation skills needed for community adjustment will be determined through quarterly assessment of student's strengths in that area.
GOAL 4	Adjustment to curriculum scheduling will be developed in line with post-high school plans.
GOAL 5	Curriculum scheduling will be developed in line with post-high school plans.
GOAL 6	Community placement will be determined by availability of services, keeping with student's needs.
GOAL 7	Modified graduation plans will be determined by student's readiness to adapt to a non-school environment.
GOAL 8	Community placement will be determined by student's needs and vocational opportunities.

(FORM B)


Name
SS#
DOB
Rep No
Address
Grade
School
READ
Parents
Teacher
Grad Date
Disab
Phone
Goals
Trans Acep
Trans date
Trans a
Trans b
Priority
Information
Strong
Weak
WEP I
Post Sec Ref
Post Sec Ct
WEP Re
WEP Ct
Supportive
VR Re
VR Ct
DHS
Sup Lvg Ct
JTPA Re
JTPA Ct
SSI DDU
Shel Emp Ct

(FORM E)

GV AEA 14

TGIF Exit Interview

Graduation _____

Other _____

_____

_____

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Phone ( ) _____

Marital Single ☐ Engaged ☐ Married ☐

Schooling _____

_____

_____

Training _____

_____

_____

Employment _____

_____

_____

Wages _____

Benefits _____

_____

Military _____

Branch Enlisted Term

Group Home _____

_____

_____

Needs _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(FORM F)

GV AEA 14
POST-SECONDARY
VOCATIONAL PLANNING

Name _____

School _____

Grad.date _____

Transition Goals

ASSIGNED 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

COMPLETED 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Vocational Testing

Test	Date	Results

Job Tryouts

D.O.T.	Date	Strengths/Deficits

Vocational Capabilities Not Tapped

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

Strengths

Compensatory Skills/Abilities

_____

_____

Learning Modifications/ Adaptations

_____

_____

_____

Post High School

Employment Yes No ____Full Time ____Summer Employment

Education Yes No

Community College _____

Voc/Trade School _____

4 yr. College _____

Community Placement

Group Home Yes No _____

Group Home

Independent Living Yes No _____

Address

(FORM G)